Could AI help cure 'downward spiral' of human loneliness?

Level 2: Intermediate – Teacher's notes

Article summary: The article presents two sides to considering AI for companionship and whether it can help solve loneliness.

Time: 60 minutes

Skills: Reading, Speaking, Writing

Language focus: Modals of possibility and recommendations

Materials needed: One copy of the worksheet per student

1. Warmer

a. The purpose of this activity is to get students thinking about their personality type and what qualities and attributes it has for them. When thinking about the extrovert, introvert and ambivert labels, remind students that none is better than any of the others. It is a continuum that may change over time and in different circumstances. After students have completed the quiz, give them the point values below so they can tally their answers. Encourage students to share their answers, as well as their thoughts and opinions about the topic. Please note this quiz is not scientific.

	Always	*Sometimes*	*Never*
1. I feel energised at parties and social activities.	3	2	1
2. I need alone time every day to recharge.	1	2	3
3. I love meeting and talking to new people.	3	2	1
4. I would rather read a book or watch a film than meet new people.	1	2	3
5. I work better alone.	1	2	3
6. I work better in a team.	3	2	1
7. I like being the centre of attention.	3	2	1
8. I prefer to be in the background or "behind the scenes".	1	2	3

Quiz results

8–12 points: You're probably an introvert. You may prefer listening and reflecting before speaking and spending time one-on-one at large gatherings. You enjoy quiet time alone. You enjoy observing the world around you. You might prefer to text than talk.
13–18 points: You're probably an ambivert. Your personality can be introverted or extroverted, depending on the situation and the people involved. You're very adaptable and flexible. You're a balanced person who can be comfortable in many different situations.
19–24 points: You're probably an extrovert. You may be outgoing and talkative. You're not afraid to be in the spotlight and like it when all eyes are on you. You are excited about interacting with other people. Your social life is busy, and that's how you like it.

2. Key words

a. Ask students to do the exercise individually and compare their answers in pairs or small groups.

Key:
1. *artificial intelligence (AI)*
2. *introvert*
3. *chatbot*
4. *bond*
5. *value*
6. *lonely*
7. *withdraw*
8. *isolation*
9. *discourage*
10. *interact*
11. *moral*
12. *privacy*

b. Before reading the article carefully, students use some of the key words to fill the gaps in the sentences to ensure that they understand and know how the words are used in other contexts.

Key:
1. *introverts*
2. *artificial intelligence / AI*
3. *value*
4. *lonely*
5. *bond*
6. *chatbots*
7. *isolation*

3. Comprehension check

a. Students answer the questions based on the information in the article. They may do this in different ways, e.g. in item 1, they may say, '*The 2013 sci-fi film Her starred Joaquin Phoenix and Scarlett Johansson',* or similar.

Key (suggested answers):
1. *Her; Joaquin Phoenix and Scarlett Johansson*
2. *that it has an important role to play*
3. *They can bring personalised and stimulating experiences.*
4. *nearly four million people (or more than 7%)*
5. *young adults and mothers with small children*
6. *heart disease, dementia, stroke, depression, anxiety, premature death*
7. *that forming relationships with machines could lead to fewer human relationships*
8. *that having a close human friend is the best solution for loneliness*
9. *that there are rules to keep them moral and trustworthy and that privacy is protected*
10. *Scarlett Johansson*

4. Key language

a. The activity allows students to review modals of possibility and recommendation. You may point out or review the different tenses used with the modals in the sentences. As an extension activity, have students underline the rest of the verb phrases used in each sentence and compare the tenses.

Key:
1. *may*
2. *would*
3. *could*
4. *could*
5. *can*
6. *may*

b. Students can write three sentences of their own, using modals for possibility. Invite students to challenge themselves and get creative as they write their sentences. If students need support, you may wish to have them work in pairs. Save some time for students to share examples of their work.

5. Discussion

a. Students discuss the statements related to the article and give their reasons and justifications for each answer, referring to their own experiences wherever possible.

6. In your own words

a. Ask students to research more about AI.

b. Students could then present their reports to the class. Encourage students to share their opinions and give reasons to support their answers. Encourage students to use some of the given phrases in their presentations when stating facts and their views.